The Real Ethical Dilemmas for new entrants to Commercial Practice

Top Ten Tips – for City Trainees

1. When doing research, take it as far as you can in the time available and be ready to justify the view you’ve reached. If you could not complete the task for any reason, tell your supervisor where you think there are gaps in your research.

2. When work is delegated to you, make sure you are clear on the purpose of the task, precisely what is to be done, by when and when you can come back with questions (before the deadline). Find out what support is available to you and ask for feedback once the task is finished.

3. Always aim to meet deadlines but, if you can’t (despite all your efforts), tell your supervisor in good time before the deadline, not at the deadline.

4. Be proactive about getting work and developing your knowledge/skills; show interest.

5. Never backdate anything (but make sure you understand what an “effective date” is, and why it's different).

6. Think about email etiquette and risk. For example:
   (i) Do not be overly casual when communicating with clients by email. Starting an email "Hi Steve, hope you had a great weekend..." when writing to the GC of an important client may not be the best opening line.
   (ii) Always double check addressees in your emails. It is so easy, accidentally, to include an individual from a different deal who has the same or similar name or to copy somebody from the other side in what should be a private communication with a client.

7. Be very careful about discussing work matters with people outside the office. They may well be interested in your job and the deals or cases you’re working on and it can be tempting to share this. But bear in mind breach of client confidentiality. In addition, you never know who you're talking to, or who that person is connected with.

8. Avoid mentioning work-related issues on your personal Facebook or Twitter account. Think of all social media as being potentially accessible by clients and/or employers and bear that in mind with any posts or pictures too.

9. Always log the time actually spent on client work (subject to the firm's rules on minimum billing periods), don't "edit" the time.

10. If you think you have made a mistake or something feels wrong, tell a partner immediately; don't try to cover it up or deal with it on your own it, it will almost certainly emerge at a later date, by which time it might be too late to do anything about it. Flag it up and the focus then becomes how to solve the problem.

And above all, trust your gut. If something feels wrong, it probably is, so talk it through with someone senior.

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